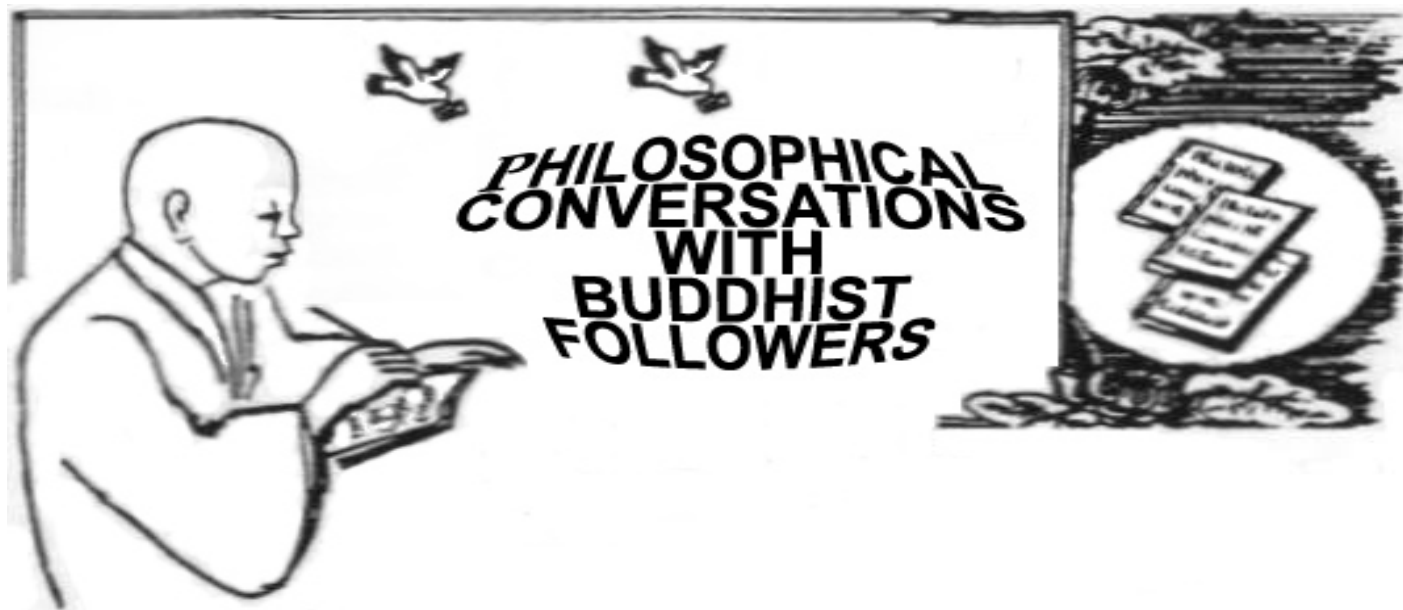




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(Written by Bodhisattva Precept BAO-DANG Velvet-Bias, Director of the Dharma Flower Temple.

To all Buddhist Followers,

(Recently, I have been receiving many phone calls, emails, and written letters from Buddhists all over the world, in which, have made many inquiries about the meanings of “making charitable donations”, and the merits obtained from making charitable donations, in order for them to maintain their faith in the matter of giving and making offerings).

In light of these events, I decided to offer the following explanations. The topic will be explored further in “Letters of Philosophical Conversation with Buddhist Followers number 20, 21, 22”(All can be accessed and downloaded via the Temple’s website at: www.dharmaflowertemple.com).

Soon to be published Sutra: The Karma of Good versus Evil (in bilingual texts of Vietnamese and English, plus illustrations).

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THE AMBASSADOR OF CHARITY

Before the press announced that Ms Chen Shu-chu had received an award, no one who passed her vegetable stand at Taitung would have suspected that she was a true heroine of Taiwan.

On April 29th, 2010, Time Magazine announced the list of the 100 most

Influential people in the world for 2010. Those selected were divided into the categories of Leaders, Heroes, Thinkers, and Artists.

That year, there were 53 US honorees and 47 personalities from 23 different other countries. Surprisingly, in addition to famous powerful figures such as US President Barack Obama, former President Bill Clinton, Brazilian President Luiz Da Silva, Joint Chiefs Admiral Mike Mullen, Apple CEO Steve Jobs, 2008 former Republican Vice Presidential Candidate Sara Palin, movie star Jet Li, race driver young author, and famous Chinese blogger Han Han, there appeared an elderly female vegetable stand merchant from Taitung, Taiwan.

PRODUCE SELLER MS CHEN SHU-CHU.

Ms. CHEN, 61, sells green vegetables at the Taitung Market. Although her life has many hardships and modest income, she still takes the money she earned to help people in need. Her daily expenditures are about 1 New Taiwan Dollar; The exchange rate as of 11 May 2010 was 1 US dollar to 30.5 TWD (*New Taiwan Dollar*) however, the total amount of her charitable expenditures comes to as high as 10 Million Taiwan dollars (320,000USD). She simply believes that by helping someone every day, she will sleep better every night.

After a day of hard work, there is nothing more enjoyable to her than a bowl of hot instant noodles, with now and then a few strands of green vegetables.

So, on the 29th of April, Time selected her as one of the 100 exemplary personalities of 2010. 3 May 2010, Forbes Asia named her the Most Outstanding Philanthropist of 2010, and Ms Chen Shu-chu traveled to America to receive her award.

Commenting on the matter of a vegetable merchant suddenly coming into the list of the 100 most influential persons of 2010, Time Managing Editor Richard Stengel and Executive Editor Radhika Jones said that annually when they issue this top names list of famous personalities whose influence truly shakes the world, Time journalists also submit to the Magazine special individuals. They can be very ordinary persons; very few people know about; however, their quiet gestures and actions in their lives has the potential of moving people's emotions and way of thinking as well as attitudes of many people around the world.

AMBASSADOR OF CHARITY CHEN SHU-CHU.

Ms. Chen Shu-chu likes to help individuals such as disabled, orphaned kids. Selling vegetables at the outside market does not bring in a lot, but she quietly contributed up to 10 Million Taiwan dollars, which calculates to 320,000 American dollars. Time selected Ms Chen as one of their 2010 Most Influential People and invited her to New York to participate in a grand banquet on 4 May 2010. When commenting about Ms Chen Shu-chu, Time quoted a phrase from her: *"Only money used for needy individuals has worth."*

Upon receiving an invitation to go to New York to receive the award, Ms Chen was very surprised. In weak health, and sore limbs, having never traveled abroad, Ms Chen did not want to go. The Taiwan President Ma Ying-jeou, upon receiving this information, quickly

sent her a congratulatory telegram, encouraging her to go to New York and accept the award. He praised her as the “Ambassador of Charity”; encouraged her to accept the award **“so the whole world will know of the humanism of the people of Taiwan”**. He thanked her and directed the Taiwan Foreign Ministry do everything possible for her to travel to New York and attend the award ceremony the evening of 4 May.

Ms Chen had never traveled abroad; had no passport. The Taiwan Foreign Ministry at once selected a group of individuals to take care of preparing a passport for her. Result; within one hour, she had a passport. When Foreign Ministry personnel presented the application to her to fill out and sign, she said haltingly *“My handwriting is very bad”*, and signed the application. The day she received an invitation to meet Pres. Ma Ying-jeou, she dressed up, and even prior to that went to a beauty salon to have her usually unkempt hair done. She told her friends that to be able to meet with Pres. Ma required that she dress up and has her hair done to show respect for the person who is the leader of the country.

When she met the group of journalists who would follow her to take photos, she was extremely awkward. She told one of the journalists: *“I am a person who likes to work; do not like to relax; definitely do not like to talk about going on a vacation.*

Upon receiving notification to accept an award, I intended to ask someone to receive it for me but Pres. Ma Ying-jeou and the Taitung District Chief encouraged me to go. It was hard to decide. At that time, I thought I couldn't do anything; what is the point in going? I kept thinking should I go or should I not go?”

Even though she was about to leave for NY to take part in the award ceremony of 4 May, Ms. Chen still went out to the Taitung market to water and straighten up her veggie stand. She neatly stored the perishable vegetables so that upon return, they would still be usable. She inherited this stand from her mother, now about 48 yrs. ago. During the past 48 years, other than once when she went to Taipei for some medical care, she had never left it for even one day. Daily, she moved to and from 3 places, her home, the wholesale vegetable sellers' market, and her vegetable stand.

The Taitung District Chief Huang Jian-ting and his wife went to her house and took her to buy 2 sets of new clothes to wear for traveling to the US for the award. The Foreign Ministry also selected a female assistant to accompany her to the US; as well as an official responsible for her personal needs.

STRANGE DAYS IN AMERICA

The evening of 3 May 2010, old lady Chen Shu-chu departed Taipei and flew to NY; checked into the Queens Hilton. At her home, she slept on a hard wood plank; now she slept on a strange too soft mattress; time completely up side down so all night she didn't get a wink of sleep. Nevertheless, on the morning of 4 May, she awoke and looked at the strange hotel surroundings.

A while later she had breakfast with a few officials of the Taiwan Culture and Economics Section (*UN Taiwan representatives*) along with their wives. She told them that she was not use to sleeping on a big and soft mattress so she did not get a wink of sleep.



After waking, she watched some TV in Mandarin. Nevertheless she could not understand the Korean sub titles; just watched it for leisure. Her truthful and direct attitude made everyone like her that much more. In a slightly ashamed manner, she also explained to everyone why she liked to do charitable work. At age 13, her mother died. She was the oldest child so it was left to her to take care of her younger siblings. From then on, she took care of the veg stand her mother left her to make money to care for her siblings' care and education. Seeing so many poor kids just like her siblings, whenever she could, she would save a little money to help those children. She did not think of her actions as charity work; only knew that by helping anyone made her quite happy.

After breakfast, she asked to go see the vegetable market in NY's Chinatown. Seeing the familiar vegetables made her facial expression exceedingly pleased. After seeing the veggie market, the Taipei Culture and Econ personnel took her to a salon for hair makeup in preparation for the award ceremony of 4 May. The hair stylists wanted her to prepare her

hairstyle this way and that; but she just wanted it arranged in a net bun in the back as she combed it on a daily basis. She said:

“Comb it this way is more comfortable”.

The evening of 4 May, she arrived to participate in the ceremony of Time's pick of the 2010 Most Influential People. Accompanying her was Mr. Song Shen-yu, Political Charge, Taiwan Culture and Economics Section. When she stepped on the red carpet, and facing the blinding glare of the cameras, at first she felt extremely tense; only after a while later did she gradually get used to it. While waiting at an elevator, Ms. Chen met Ms. Sarah Palin, whom Mr. Song introduced to Ms. Chen. As one who became aware of the charitable work of Ms. Chen, Sarah Palin shook hands cheerfully with Ms. Chen and said:

“ Very honored to meet you”.

That evening, the two took a commemorative photo together. A number of famous personalities such as Korean David Chang, famous chefs, clothes designers, Elton John, Rachael Ray, Betty White, Suze Orman also attended.

50 persons selected by Time for the year 2010 attended the award ceremony. Everyone was deeply impressed by the charity work of Ms. Chen Shu-chu, a person who “forgets her daily life” to care for others. Ms' Chen's attitude of caring for others, first, then lastly thinking of herself emotionally moved everyone.

Time magazine invited famous Taiwanese movie director Li An to compose an article introducing Ms. Chen Shu-chu that was printed in Time's 100 article and read during the ceremony. Washington University Professor Michael Sherraden ardently paid respect to her and praised President Ma Ying-jeou for an **“Ambassador of Charity”** showing everyone the good works accomplished by the Taiwan island nation.

On this occasion, many journalists and educators wrote articles praising the “Ambassador of Charity” Chen Shu-Chu. Please allow us to extract part of the article “Chen Shu-Chu, Taiwan Hero”, by Prof Lin Deng-qiu, read at the Taipei College of Education: “Vegetable seller Ms. Chen Shu-Chu has been selected by Time as one of the 100 Most Influential Persons of 2010. She ranked number 8 among the Hero Group. She is worthy of being a Hero. People who know of her noble work regard it as being an honor.

Ms. Chen Shu-Chu on the contrary said:

“That receiving an award is not important; selling a lot of vegetables to have a lot of money to help others is the important thing”.

Ms. Chen Shu-chu's work is an extremely valuable lesson for the people of Taiwan. Her kindness is strength and value which will encourage Taiwan to progress. It has value a hundred and thousands times more than the empty rhetoric of the educated elite.

Prior to the press announcing that Ms. Chen received an award, people who passed by her stall did not have an inkling that she was a true hero of Taiwan. Many people in Taiwan society should follow the charitable spirit of Ms. Chen...contributing to a better development of Taiwanese society.”

According to the press, Ms. Chen had donated 100% of her awarded money to charity, without sparing a single penny.

Year 2012, she also receives a Ramon Magsaysay Award foundation of the Philippines as Nobel of Asian. She is one among of 60 people received Magsaysay Award.

From the content of this article, I, Upasika Bodhisattva Bảo Đăng (*Velvet Bias*), wish that my audience would learn from Ms. Chen that her charity work is true to Buddhist practice. Ms. Chen's example demonstrates the optimal value of charity giving; the actions of giving from the bottom of the heart, and that true generosity will never differentiate age, race, gender, social status, nor expecting any form of commencement in return.

I would also like to take this opportunity to expand on this art of giving:

- **To give words of kindness, praising the good deeds of others, rather than criticizing** (*karma: hearing good words from others in return*)
- **To give good thoughts of others and for others, instead of ill thoughts in any form** (*karma: others will always think well of you and for you*)
- **To express kindness physically by offering a smile, be happy with anyone you know and meet; rather than frowning, pouting, as if you are not pleased with what you see, or as if you are having negative judgments toward a person, or a situation** (*negative karma: anywhere you go will have mishaps, and anyone you meet will cause you unwanted troubles*)
- **To show true compassion toward those who are less fortunate than yourself by all means, from financially, educationally, etc** (*karma: you will receive the same respect from anyone you meet*)
- **To give financial support to those in need** (*karma: you will never face poverty*)
- **To give medical care to the sick** (*karma: you will never suffer from chronic diseases or incurable sicknesses, even if you do, you will always receive optimal help from kindhearted medical personnel*)
- **The greatest act of charity is to grant happiness to humanity, rescue others from any suffering, encourage the timid to gain self-confidence, provide physical and mental security to the desperate, to give a light of hope to those who those who lost the meanings to their lives, to guide their conscious away from the dark thoughts of suicide. In addition, we need to comfort and help these individuals to understand self-contentment, to appreciate and be happy with what they have, make the best of it, and strive for improvement** (*karma: help will always come to you in any from and at any time of need; your mind and body will always be at peace*)
- **Those who do not harm or steal from others will never face any form of financial of physical insecurity**

It is important to understand that you will receive the consequences for whatever you committed. Figuratively speaking, if you plant bitter melon seeds, do not expect to harvest

the fruits of sweet watermelon. Furthermore, true kindness coming from the heart will also be expressed physically on your unique appearance. If your skin is scaly, bumpy, your hair is dry, dull, and brittle, your complexion is poor, your face always lack a smile, you rarely show a peaceful smile for your own contentment, nor granting a friendly smile as an act of kindness toward others, then these are some of the many features that describes you as an individual with a dry personality, selfish, lack of compassion, and lack of happiness.

Moreover, before you assume that other misjudged you or not treating you right, you must first re-evaluate yourself and the way you treat others. I must stress that an individual who is truly friendly, loving, and caring will never have ill thoughts of other mistreating you, because you are already content with what you have.

On the other hand, if you only pay attention to how you are being treated, then this makes you a self-centered person, only seeking attention for yourself, and in other words, being selfish. An individual who is narcissist in addition to declaring how caring and loving they are is very unlikely to be true to their words. If you are truly a caring individual, then you will act from a true and righteous heart. Thus, you will not seek for any form of rewards for your actions in return, you will not consider how others deem your goodwill, you will not care about how they will judge what you do or who you are, making you a selfless person. Now, when you are a selfless person, you will not think about nor judge about how other treat you.

Nevertheless, a wise, righteous, kind-hearted person, in addition to being religious will be able to see the good and bad in humanity, will be able to differentiate between heaven and hell, good and evil, right and wrong, truth and fraud.

A wise person who recognizes their flaws and aims to make changes should approach and befriend otherwise figures. Learn their truthful guidance and advices practice Buddhism, accept your imperfections to make amends for a brighter life-long journey ahead.

Nam-mo AMITABA BUDDHA

Bodhisattva Bảo-Đăng (*Velvet Bias*) June 2013.



